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ABSTRACT

Children from four elementary schools in Illinois were participants in the implementation of a project intended to improve their self-esteem through adult role-model intervention. The objectives of the project were to demonstrate that: (1) the adults in children's lives play a significant role; (2) an individual's sense of belonging and acceptance can be affected by the labels placed upon them; (3) all teachers with whom children come into contact can affect an individual's self-esteem; and (4) how children perceive themselves can have an affect on their self-esteem. Interventions used were designed to address two major solution components, parents and teachers as positive role models. Parents were given two surveys regarding goals for self-esteem. Similarly, children were given their own survey to determine their own self-concept. Parental involvement in the classroom was encouraged through an open-door policy and a weekly newsletter reporting class activities or important information. Finally, teachers conducted self-esteem lessons for students. Data analysis showed that the project achieved its goal of helping students increase their levels of self-esteem through positive adult role-model intervention. (AA)

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SELF-ESTEEM ENHANCEMENT THROUGH ADULT ROLE-MODEL INTERVENTION

by

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Prospect School
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Edison School
Elmhurst, IL

Edgar Allan Poe School
Arlington Heights, IL

Rondout School
Lake Forest, IL

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

A. General Statement of Problem

The targeted elementary students at Edgar Allen Poe School, Prospect School, Rondout School, and Edison School exhibit inadequate levels of self-esteem, as evidenced by teacher observations, teacher-made assessments, and student interviews.

B. Description of Immediate Problem Setting

Site A

District #21 is composed of educators which represent 96.9 percent White, three percent Black, two and a half percent Hispanic and three tenths percent Asian/Pacific Island. Eleven and four tenths of these educators are male, and 88.6 percent are female. The characteristics of these educators regarding their education include, 15.4 years of teaching experience, 46.0 percent have only their Bachelor's Degree, and 54.0 percent have their Master's Degree. The average class size for the district is 19.1 students, while at Poe, it is 21 students.

Edgar Allan Poe (Poe), is a preschool through sixth grade elementary building, also housing several primary bilingual classes. The building's enrollment of 484, is composed of White (63.4 percent), Black (two percent), Hispanic (18.8 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander (15.7 percent) students. Of the

484 students enrolled, seven and two tenths percent are from low income families, and 11.2 percent are Limited-English-Proficient. The attendance rate at Poe is 95.3 percent with zero percent chronic truancy. The student mobility rate is 18.9 percent.

Poe's instructional styles include the use of whole language, cooperative learning, multi-age classrooms, thematic units, and hands-on science. The school is currently moving toward a technology based curriculum as well. The intermediate classrooms within Poe, grades three through six, all contain one Macintosh computer that is networked throughout the building. Often, an intermediate grade will team up with a primary grade for cross grade level instruction.

Site B

Prospect Elementary School is located in suburban Clarendon Hills. One of seven elementary schools in Community Consolidated School District #181, Prospect is one of two in Clarendon Hills; the rest are located in Hinsdale.

Prospect has 280 students with little racial diversity: 95 percent White, four tenths percent Black, two and one half percent Hispanic and two and one tenth percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Only two and one tenth percent of the student population is considered low-income and three and seven tenths percent limited English proficiency. Prospect's attendance rate is 96.7%, whereas chronic truancy is nonexistent. Nine and six-tenths of the students are mobile or leaving the district. The instructional setting at Prospect includes an average class size of 19.5 students. The average minutes per day devoted to the core subject areas are Mathematics-54, Science-18, English-37 and Social Sciences-29.

Teachers and administrators in District #181, are not a racially diverse group. Ninety nine and four tenths percent of the districts teachers are White, while only six tenths represent Asian/Pacific Islander. Black, Hispanic and Native American are nonexistent. Average teaching experience in the district is 14.9 years. Thirty-two percent of the of the teachers have a Bachelor's degree. Sixty-three and eight tenths percent of the teachers have a Master's degree or beyond. The pupil-teacher ratio in District #181 is 17.4:1, and the pupil-administrator ratio is 234.8:1. Prospect is considered a medium sized elementary school.

The average teacher salary in District #181 for the 1992-93 school year was $50,701. Administrator salaries average $72,759. The average operating expenditure per student in 1991-1992 was $7,021.

District #181 prides itself on maintaining high standards, including the area of staff development. Current teaching strategies in #181 include cooperative learning, whole language, and authentic assessment. Other notable characteristics include sight-based management , and a move toward non-letter grade report cards.

Site C

Rondout School has a history which dates back to 1917. The original structure, which is still operational today, housed two classrooms. Although still classified as a small school, Rondout has grown considerably over the past 77 years. Three separate additions were built to meet the growing needs of the community. In 1928, two additional classrooms were erected. In 1964, the front foyer was built, as well as a gym, two

restrooms, and five classroom/offices. The third addition was built in 1971. This phase included the building of a kitchen, cafeteria, two additional restrooms, and six additional classrooms.

The seventeen teachers at Rondout average 9.8 years of teaching experience. Thirty one and one tenth percent of them hold advanced degrees. There are also two full time administrators, and a grand total of 28 staff members. The kindergarten through eighth grade teachers are currently involved in extensive curriculum development. Classroom teachers are presently given enormous amounts of discretion as to the curriculum they employ.

In addition to servicing kindergarten through eighth grade students, Rondout offers many other programs and services. Rondout addresses special student populations by providing speech/language services, social work services, English as a second language (ESL), and a Learning Disabilities pull out program. The gifted are also addressed in the classrooms as well as through a pull out program.

The art/music teacher meets with each grade level two times per week for each subject. There is also an optional band program offered for students in grades four through eight. All students attend computer class twice a week. Aside from having a computer lab and full time computer teacher, each classroom teacher has a computer which has been specifically allocated for their individual students' use. Students in grades one through eight attend physical education classes on a daily basis. Kindergartners attend two times per week. There is a Learning Resource Center, staffed by a full time librarian, and a daily on site hot lunch program. Rondout has a current population of

approximately 90 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The average class size is ten students. There is one classroom per grade level.

Site D

District #205 is composed of educators which represent 99.2 percent White, three percent Black, and five percent Hispanic. Twenty-nine percent of these educators are male and 70.3 percent are female. The characteristics of these educators include,15.8 years teaching experience, 25.6 percent with a Bachelor's Degree, and 74.4 percent with a Master's Degree or above.

Edison is a kindergarten through fifth grade elementary building. The student population is 308. Ninety seven and seven tenths percent of the students are White, and 2.3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the 308 students enrolled, .6 percent are from low income families, and .3 are Limited-English-Proficient . The attendance rate at Edison is 96.6 percent with zero percent chronic truancy. The student mobility rate is 1.6 percent.

C. Description of the Surrounding Community

Site A

Poe is an elementary school centrally located within a residential neighborhood in the Northern portion of Arlington Heights. Arlington Heights has 75,460 persons, as of May 10, 1991. Of these 75,460 persons, 71,514 are White, 479 persons are Black, and 3,467 are of another race. The majority of the residents of Arlington Heights, 6,854 persons, are between 30 and 34 years of age (3,148-male, 3,289-female). The average income totals $59,647.00, and the majority of houses range in price from $125,000.00-$149,000.00. Arlington

Heights holds 30,428 houses of which 20,914 are owner occupied, 7,896 are rented, and 1,618 are vacant.

Arlington Heights also houses six industrial office parks which contain over three hundred firms, including Texas Instruments and Honeywell. The largest employer in Arlington Heights is the Motorola Corporation.

Site B

Clarendon Hills is a residential community of approximately 7,000 residents, 19 miles west of the Chicago Loop. The average home value is $191,957, and the average income is $67,652. The median age of residents in Clarendon Hills is 36. In 1991, there was only one violent crime and 103 thefts.

Site C

Rondout School District 72 is located in unincorporated Lake Forest. The district encompasses one school building which also houses the district office. The students who attend Rondout School come from diverse communities and backgrounds. The vast majority of students are white. Small percentages of the student population are Black, Hispanic, and Asian. The four main areas which feed into Rondout School are Mettawa, a small section of Lake Bluff, and sections of unincorporated Libertyville, and Unincorporated Lake Forest. Mettawa has the highest per capita income in the state of Illinois, which is in sharp contrast to other areas in the district that are significantly less prosperous. The population of the Rondout School community is 1,156. The percentage of families classified as low-income is 2.3 percent. Those classified as Limited-English-Proficient is 4.6 percent. The operating expenditure per pupil for the

1991-1992 school year was $11,111. Rondout School is surrounded by a rich industrial base. The major employers in the district are located at Conway Park, just east of the 294 toll way, on Route 60. These businesses include Trust Mark, Brunswick Corporation Headquarters, and More Business Forms.

Site D

Edison is an elementary school located within a residential neighborhood in the east part of Elmhurst. Elmhurst contains 46,560 persons, 95.1 percent White, nine tenths percent Black, three percent Hispanic and four percent other. The majority of the residents of Elmhurst, (14,580 persons), are between 25 and 44 years of age. Fifty one percent of these people are female. The average per capita income is $68,402. Elmhurst holds 43,360 persons in occupied household units. Elmhurst also has been the third largest employer of local residents through retail trade for the past eighteen years.

E. National and State Context of the Problem

One school of thought concerning children's lack of confidence in their own ability are the effects of adult role models influencing their lives.

> Perhaps nothing effects health and energy, peace of mind, the goals we set and achieve, our inner happiness, the quality of our relationships, our competence, performance, and productivity, quite as much as the health of our self-esteem (Youngs, 1991, p.2).

Individuals who have a healthy self-esteem have a realistic awareness of themselves. They are self-confident individuals who see themselves as being successful. On the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem have a poor self image which curtails their

ability to build relationships, feel success, and become self-actualizing human beings (Berne and Savary, 1981).

> ...An individuals self-concept determines his or her behavior in almost everything that person does. It also affects intelligence, for people who believe that they are able, will try, while those who believe they are unable, will not (Burke, 1993, quoting Combs).

Not only is poor self-esteem affecting academic achievement; but poor self-esteem may affect home life as well. According to Youngs (1991), over a million children ran away from home in the United States in 1990. Thirty-four percent of these children were located by child-find agencies. Many parents refused to take them back. Often children feel eager to succeed at home or at school but will become discouraged when their attempts are not successful. This reflects the current state of many children's lack of acceptance.

Adults have control over how they are able to care for themselves; likewise, how they allow others to treat them. However, the sense of identity developed by children is greatly influenced by the adult role models in their daily lives (Youngs, 1991). Many educators have begun to recognize the importance of allowing students to develop holistically, and that curricular alterations have been made to reflect this need. According to Canfield and Wells (1976), student performance in the content areas have not suffered due to the time spent on self-concept building activities. In the classroom's of today sit the adults of the future. "Among society's institutions, education is the one best positioned to have an influence on the development of self-esteem among people" (Siccone, 1993).

CHAPTER 2

PROBABLE CAUSE

In order to document the extent of students lack of self-esteem, parent and student surveys will be administered, teacher observations and anecdotal records will be noted, and parent-teacher conferences will be held.

There are many types of evidence researchers may collect in order to document a students lack of self-esteem. Probable cause for inadequate levels of self-esteem in children, as they relate to the specific sites targeted in this study, are addressed below.

Site A

The probable causes of poor self-esteem of the students in the fifth grade at Edgar Allan Poe may be due to two parent working families resulting in latch-key kids. Students coming home to empty houses without parental role model guiding and sharing in excitements and accomplishments may cause a child to feel less than important. Another cause may be due to exaggerated parental and/or student expectations that may in fact be unreachable.

Site B

Fourth graders at Prospect School may exhibit a lack of self-esteem due to a variety of factors. According to the school social worker and their former primary teachers, this particular group of children carries with them a reputation for being a large group

of low level achievers, lacking the necessary social skills to positively interact with one another. Furthermore, due to a higher than the average class size (25), and the wide variety of learners, many of the students feel left out of the mainstream. Students have learned over the years ways to "fall through the cracks". They lack an identity with which they can use the elements of their environment to be successful.

Prospect School is set in a quiet upper middle class community that is considered quite safe. However, the physical safety of these fourth grade students is most likely not an issue that affects their self-esteem.

The issue most apparent to the self concept of the students is their adult role models. This class has eight students with divorced parents who have joint custody. These students in many cases often spend several nights of each week split up between both parents. Emotionally and organizationally this leaves the students with extra "baggage." This includes distributing school handouts, report cards, and other communications from the teacher. Furthermore, due to the fact that this class is large, teachers traditionally have ignored poor behavior without rectifying the problem, but rather putting down the child. These areas all affect the self-esteem of the fourth graders at Prospect School.

> Everyone knows that children cry. It's part of growing up. It seems they are crying more today than yesterday. Maybe there is more to growing up today than yesterday. Maybe we should find out why this is happening? (Kramer & Frazer, 1990, p. 12).

Site C

The students at Rondout Elementary School are in the unique situation of having very small class sizes. The targeted group of students are in the first grade classroom totaling twelve students. As there is only one classroom per grade level at Rondout School, these same twelve students were together in kindergarten last year, and will continue to be together through eighth grade. "Approval from the group has a significant impact on the child's self-concept as peers become the significant others that provide important feedback to the individual" (Reasoner, p. 28). Should children be labeled in a particular way by the small group of peers they are in daily contact with, those particular individuals sense of belonging and acceptance may be affected.

In addition to students negatively affecting the self esteem of others, another significant probable cause is the adults in children's lives. "Teachers who have high expectations for those in their classes and believe that every child can succeed have students that have higher achievement scores at the end of the year" (Reasoner citing Rosenthal and Jacobson, l968, p. 33). Therefore, all of the teachers that children come into contact with can have implications on an individuals self-esteem.

> "The key to building self-esteem in children lies in how teachers feel about themselves. Unless teachers can look realistically at themselves and feel good about what they see, they are not likely to be effective in building self-esteem in children" (Reasoner, p. 3).

When both parents work outside the home, the self-esteem of children may be affected. Students from these families may be concerned about where they are going after school, and who their care givers will be. In addition, parents who arrive home from work late and tired, may have more difficulty finding the time to devote to school related issues. Although the concept of both parents working is beyond the control of the teacher, it is a real life issue that may be causing poor self-esteem among children.

Site D

Certain second graders at Edison School may be lacking in self-esteem for the following reasons

1. both parents work and in some cases, one parent may be away from home for days at a time resulting in the children becoming "latch-key kids";
2. parents are involved in other events aside from education based activities; thus children feel that school time, a majority of where they spend their day, is not as important as other events may be;
3. parents have high expectations of their children therefore, children feel inadequate in their ability to perform resulting in their opinion that true success is unobtainable.

A reoccurring concern expressed in the literature is that of poor self-esteem in children. According to Youngs, (1990, p. 7), "self-esteem is a composite picture of perceived self-value. It's the disposition to experience yourself as worthy of happiness, health and friendship, love, achievement, and success". These components are all pieces of a puzzle which contribute to positive self-esteem. When one piece is missing, self-esteem can be affected. Marston (1990), relays that self-esteem effects every area of childrens' existence.

The literature suggests several underlying causes inherent to the problem of low self-esteem in children. These probable causes have been categorized into the following four main areas; poor social skills, a lack of identity, a lack of physical safety, and inadequate role models.

"Perhaps nothing affects health and energy, peace of mind, the goals we set and achieve, our inner happiness, the quality of our relationships, our competence, performance, and productivity quite as much as the health of our self-esteem" (Youngs, 1991, p. 8).

The increasing concern over the difficulties children are having exhibiting acceptable social skills is quite broad in scope. Educators have many opportunities to deal with a vast array of social and moral situations. The way these situations are dealt with have implications on childrens' future social and moral development. According to Kramer & Frazer (1990), individuals who cannot hold down a job are fired, not because of a lack of job skills, but rather their inability to get along with others, the exhibiting of negative attitudes, and their ineffective communication skills. "We can help young people...if we can teach them how to get along-first with themselves-and then with each other" (Kramer & Frazer, 1990, p. 15). It is apparent that the ability to exhibit appropriate social skills is not something individuals are born with. According to a study by the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem, it was reported that a common recurring theme in many societal problems is a lack of self-esteem (Canfield & Siccone, 1993). "The correlational findings between low self-esteem and social problems are very positive and compelling" (Canfield & Siccone, 1993, p. 109). Children absorb what they see in their lives and later use it as an understanding of how to treat others. The way social issues are addressed for youngsters early on, has an impact on the foundation of future and social adaptations. (Greenberg, 1992).

As with inappropriate social skills, how children perceive themselves, have implications on their self-esteem. Children tend to believe that if something has occurred in the past, then it is likely to continue to exist in the future (Canfield &

Siccone, 1993). Thus, the self-fulfilling prophecy comes into play and the behaviors of the past persist. The reactions children have regarding factors such as learning, their school success or failure, and how they will react to the physical, social, and emotional climate of the classroom, is well formatted by the time they are ready to enter school (Canfield & Wells, 1976). "Self-defeating attitudes certainly are not left at home or in the hallway, but quickly find themselves inside the classroom door, and pollution of learning occurs" (Borba, 1990, p. Intro.). It is often the case that children are anxious to be successful. However, when efforts to accomplish their goals fail to produce positive results, students become discouraged. Maintaining a positive self-esteem is difficult for some children due to their inability to make and keep friends (Canfield & Wells, 1976). "The greatest revolution in our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives" (Canfield & Siccone, 1993, quoting William James, p. 269). There is much written in the literature to substantiate the correlation between childrens' lack of identity and their low self-esteem. How children appear to be reacting to a given situation is not necessarily indicative of how they truly are feeling. "The outside mask is not the same as the inside experience" (Canfield & Siccone quoting Virginia Satir, 1993, p. 175).

Throughout childhood, youngsters undergo a vast array of experiences, in a variety of situations. Childrens' perceptions regarding the physical environment in which they function has frequently been documented as factor influencing self-esteem. "The first, most critical, and fundamental aspect of self-esteem is a strong sense of physical safety. A child's life revolves around two places: home and school" (Youngs,1990, p. 56). With reference to a safe home environment, Youngs (1990), reported that without a sense of being physically safe and free from physical harm, children's ability to

develop a positive self-esteem would be greatly limited. In 1990, 43 percent of school age children in the United States arrived home to an empty house. Of this 43 percent, approximately two-thirds expressed fear in being home alone. Of those children arriving home to a care-giver other than a parent, many expressed a deep fear of the person caring for them. Twelve percent of all children feared one or both parents, while over half of the children relayed that they were afraid of a step-parent. Childrens' perceptions regarding the physical environment in which they function has frequently been documented as a factor influencing self-esteem. "In order for the child's self-esteem to grow, he needs to be in an environment of trust and support so that he can feel secure enough to take risks" (Canfield & Wells, 1976, p. 33) .

As with the home environment, the educational setting in which children are immersed has important implications on their self-esteem. Students need to feel they are free to express their thoughts and ideas without being criticized or ridiculed. "Without the critical environmental dimensions of trust, caring, and openness the teacher's efforts to enhance pupil's sense of self-esteem will be seriously limited" (Canfield & Wells, 1976, p. 5).

Not only does the literature substantiate the notion that self-esteem is affected by childrens' sense of physical safety, but in addition, is also significantly affected by the role models with whom they come into contact. Children are greatly influenced by those adults closest to them; parents, and teachers. Research shows that the way adult role models respond to children has vast implications on how the children then feel about themselves.

> "Students learn not so much from what you say, or even from what you do, as from your way of being, from those qualities and values that are so integral to your approach to life that you live them. The idea of being a role model may seem burdensome, but it is also a delightful opportunity" (Canfield & Siccone 1993, p. 31).

According to Youngs (1990), the most effective way to secure a high level of self-esteem in children is for parents to model this behavior. Parents play a vital role in developing the self-esteem of their children. "Self-esteem, both high and low, begins at home and parents are the original teachers" (Reider, 1993, p.1). Yet, in the literature, much emphasis is also given to the role of the teacher and the educational system concerning the development of childrens' self-esteem. "Among society's institutions, education is the one best positioned to have an influence on the development of self-esteem among people" (Canfield & Siccone, 1993, p. 109). The amount of time students spend in school with their teachers is extensive. Teachers have much influence with their students.

> "...As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized" (Reidner quoting Hiam Ginott, 1993, p. 42).

CHAPTER 3

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Theorists agree that adult role models play a positive role in the enhancement, or lack there of, in children's self esteem. According to Dr. Michael Popkin (1993),

> At the end of our lives, we will not remember how much money we made, how many ball games we watched, or how many things we possessed. What will come back to us in a brilliant and blinding light is the quality of the relationships we formed with those we loved: our friends, our spouses, our children.

Nearly twenty years ago, James P. Comer, a child psychiatrist at Yale University, started the School Development Program, (SDP), in two New Haven inner-city elementary schools-schools with the cities worst records for truancy, disciplinary problems, academic failure, and staff turnover (Comer, 1986). Central to this program is the belief that school and family must bond as allies to foster the children's development; to teach common positive values, to enhance the children's self-esteem, and to prepare them-emotionally, morally, linguistically, and cognitively-for success in the "mainstream."

The SDP fostered collaborative teams composed of parents and staff. These teams worked together to develop curricula and social skills training for students, hired parents as classroom assistants, sponsored social activities, and provided counseling for emotional problems. By the twelfth year of the program, the two schools had gone from last place to third in the city for academic achievement, and first in attendance. Since then, the SDP model has been successfully applied in at least 50 schools

throughout the nation. (California Task Force, January, 1990, p.73). Further research by the California Task Force indicates that the atmosphere within the school should enhance the self-esteem of both the staff as well as the students. Research indicates a high correlation between how staff members feel about themselves and how students feel about themselves. (California Task Force, January, 1990, p.66).

In other words, one's immediate family was the first group in their lives providing social responses and feedback regarding the kind of person they believe themselves to be. The feeling about one's self became internalized and became the basic foundation of self-esteem. A family providing love, encouragement, caring, concern, and support can obviously have a very positive influence in the development of a child's self-esteem. (National Council for Self-Esteem, January, 1994, p. 22).

Other researchers who support this idea include Popkin, Youngs, Marston, Kramer and Frazier, Canfield, Nelson and Glenn, Wells, Phillips, Reider, Greenberg and Siccone. "Self-esteem is a composite picture of perceived self value. It's the disposition to experience your self worthy of happiness, health and wellness, respect and friendship." (Youngs, 1991, p.56).

Project Outcomes

The targeted elementary students at Edgar Allen Poe School, Prospect School, Rondout School, and Edison School who exhibit inadequate levels of self-esteem will develop an increased level of confidence due to the positive interventions given by adult role models. The interventions used will be implemented between the months of August, 1994, and February, 1995. The measurement tools that will be used include the Pierce-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale, the Parent Information Exchange, and the Student Information Exchange. Other methods include anecdotal records containing teacher observations, documentation of teacher initiated parent contacts-

both verbal and written, weekly informational newsletters to parents, and the incorporation of parents working with children in the classroom.

The researchers believe that through the use of these interventions, targeted students will develop a more concrete and consistent self-worth resulting in a strong self-esteem. This will also allow students a safe, risk free, opportunity to "prize themselves." (Dr. Thomas Faase, personal communication, 1992). According to Dr. Barbara Clark, "The degree to which students perceive they are in control of the learning situation is positively correlated with motivation, productivity, and self-esteem" (1991, p. 101). The researchers feel that this quote directly relates to the type of classroom opportunities provided. By incorporating interventions, the type of environment referred to above will be created. Allowing for risk free opportunities, students will feel in control of the learning situations while not dwelling on the fear of failure, and may become more intrinsically motivated to achieve higher levels of learning. This would definitely increase the confidence and self-esteem among students.

Nonetheless, there are variables which may explain why gains in self-esteem may not be made. Likewise, there are critics who view efforts such as self-esteem interventions as being an ineffective distraction. According to Eggen and Kauchak, the relationship between self concept in achievement is positive but weak (Hansford & Hattie, 1982; Walberg, 1984). In attempting to understand why researchers found that self-concept had at least three subcomponents-academic, social and physical (Marsh, 1989; Marsh & Holmes, 1990), with social and physical self-concepts being essentially unrelated to academic achievement (Byrne,1984; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). Students feel good about themselves because they do well, rather than do well because they feel good about themselves(Kohn, 1994). Therefore, according to this theory, positive adult role-model intervention would be meaningless.

Solution Components

The action plan is designed to address two major solution components-parents and teachers as positive role models to enhance students' self- esteem. There will be two phases of the proposed action plan.

The first phase of the plan will begin during the week of August 29,1994, with the distribution of an informational survey to parents and students. The results of the survey will be used to determine the self-esteem perspective from the parents in comparison to that of the child's. Teachers will review the surveys to determine the levels of each child's self-concept. Parents will also be given the opportunity to sign up for classroom assistance. Emphasis will be placed on getting parents of targeted children.

Following phase one, teachers in cooperation with parents, will determine strategies to enhance self esteem within the classroom as well as at home. The purposes of these component are to bridge the home/school connection allowing for risk taking and communication, as well as allowing self reflection opportunities for parents and teachers to realize how they effect the children they are in contact with. "We are what we eat, not just biologically, but socially and emotionally. Rich substance, well organized, in positive circumstance makes us richer, more outreaching, and more productive" (Joyce and Weil, 1992, p. 289).

Self-esteem improvement would include providing a class newsletter, distributing a parent student informational survey, improving parental involvement in the classroom, initiating positive parent/teacher contacts, conducting self-esteem lessons and documentation of positive reinforcement.

Action Plan

1. Provide a class newsletter

   A. Who — Teacher and or students will design the newsletter.

   B. What — They will create a document that will represent class activities or important information.

   C. When — This will occur weekly from September, 1994, through February, 1995.

   D. Where — The work will be created, edited, and distributed within the classroom setting.

   E. How — They will use class events, accomplishments, important announcements as well as various articles of interest to create a newsletter. Teacher, student, or parent editors will be involved. Teacher will approve final form. Parents will sign and return the newsletter to the teacher.

   F. Why — This product will be a resource tool for parents to become more aware of the activities within the classroom.

2. A Parent/Student Informational Survey (PIE)

   A. Who — The survey will be designed by teachers for parents and students.

   B. What — Parents and students will complete an informational document individually.

   C. When — This will occur the week of August 29,1994. Another copy will be redistributed prior to November conferences.

   D. Where — Students will complete the survey within the classroom. Parents will complete their survey at home.

E. How — Students will be given instructions in the classroom and will be given time to complete the task. There will not be any help given to students by teachers or peers. Parents will receive the survey by mail with a cover letter explaining how and why the survey should be completed. Both survey forms will be collected by the teacher.

F. Why — This product will be a resource for teachers to better understand how parents perceive their child and how the child perceives himself / herself in relationship to school.

3. Parental Involvement in the Classroom

A. Who — Parents of children in the classroom

B. What — Teachers will encourage parents to become more involved within their child's classroom.

C. When — Teachers have an open door policy within their classroom. However, parents can visit their child's classroom during designated, prescheduled school hours.

D. Where — The involvement will take place in the classrooms.

E. How — Teachers will create a schedule of events so parents can voluntarily sign-up to give classroom assistance. Occasional meetings will be held for the parent volunteers. These meetings will help them better understand and carry out policies and procedures which take place in the classroom.

F. Why — This approach will allow for parents to become an active part of their child's education. Likewise, the child will observe the home-school connection.

4. Positive parent contacts will occur

A. Who — The classroom teacher and other school personnel

B. What — The teacher will contact parents of his/her students.

C. When — Positive contacts will take place weekly.

D. Where — These contacts will occur from the school.

E. How — Teachers will contact parents by phone, by written acknowledgement, or by face-to-face conversation.

F. Why — To enlighten parents of their children's accomplishments in hope that encouragement will continue at home.

5. Self-esteem lessons will be conducted

A. Who — Teachers and students will be a part of the self-esteem lessons.

B. What — Teachers will involve students in lessons to raise awareness and enhance self-esteem.

C. When — These lessons will take place once a week.

D. Where — The activities will take place within the school setting.

E. How — Teachers will choose age-appropriate lessons which may include, for example, "Star/Student of the Week," "Quest," peer tutoring, cooperative learning, Think-Pair-Share or assigned jobs for the week. Other lessons and activities may also be used as the teacher sees fit.

F. Why — These activities will create a greater amount of self-confidence within each child.

6. Documentation of positive reinforcement

A. Who — Teachers will document occurrences.

B. What — Documentation will include any verbal or verbal praise given to students by teachers.

C. When — Documentation will take place weekly.

D. Where — Documentation will remain in the classroom.

E. How — Teacher will communicate and record instances on a teacher-

made checklist.

F. Why — To allow teacher to become aware of the number of times he/she encourages a particular child.

Methods of Assessment

A variety of data collection methods will be used in order to assess the effects of the interventions. A way of measuring the levels of self-esteem will be through the comparison of the initial informational survey and its follow-up survey in February. The affect of parental participation within the classroom will be observed and recorded on the bases of how children interact and transfer with the positive parent role-models.

Changes in class involvement will be determined through the use of documentation kept by teachers. The number of times students raise their hand, actively participate in cooperative groups and interact positively with peers, will be supported with positive feedback from the teacher. This feedback will also be documented by the teacher.

CHAPTER 4

Historical Description Of Intervention

The objectives of this project are to demonstrate the following:

1. the adults in children's lives play a significant role,
2. an individuals sense of belonging and acceptance can be affected by the labels placed upon them,
3. all teachers that children come into contact with can affect an individual's self-esteem,
4. how children perceive themselves can have an affect on their self-esteem.

Interventions used were to address two major solution components, parents and teachers as positive role models. Parents were given two surveys regarding goals for self-esteem. Similarly, children were given their own survey to determine their own self-concept.

After establishing targeted students, the attempt to bridge the home/school connection in risk-taking, communication, and self-reflection opportunities for parents and teachers were made. This gave parents and teachers the opportunity to realize how they had affected the children.

The weekly newsletter represented a document stating class activities or important information. Parents were responsible for signing and returning each newsletter. This product served as a tool, making parents more aware of the various activities with-in the classroom.

The Parent / Student Information Exchange was given the first week of the 1994 school year. A follow up survey assessing the effectiveness of the PIE was distributed

in February of 1995. This gave teachers the opportunity to better understand how parents perceived their child and how the child perceived himself/herself in relationship to school.

Parental involvement in the classroom was encouraged through an open-door policy. Parents were also able to visit during designated, prescheduled school hours. This was done by creating a voluntary sign-up sheet for parents. Likewise, occasional meetings were held to help parents better understand and carry out policies or procedures that took place within the classroom.

Along the same lines, positive parent contacts occurred weekly. Teachers contacted parents by phone, by written acknowledgement, or by face-to-face conversation. This was a way to enlighten parents about their child's accomplishments, in the hope that encouragement would continue at home.

Finally, teachers conducted self-esteem lessons for students. The age-appropriate lessons were intended to raise awareness and enhance self-esteem within each child.

Deviations

The scope of the interventions was quite broad and demanding. First, whereas the prescribed intervention was proposed to involve only the *Quest Skills for Growing* program, it was decided after several weeks that teachers could choose other equally suitable methods indigenous to each teacher's style and curricular demands. Furthermore, the original action plan called for the documentation of consistent, weekly verbal positive reinforcement to targeted students. Teachers would then note these on a checklist. This proved to be an unrealistic burden considering the time

constraints of the school day. Frequent positive reinforcement was communicated, however, through regular parent contacts made by by phone and through written correspondence. Finally, during the course of this project, it became apparent that classroom dynamics were significantly altered through the movement of students both in and out of the school system.

Site A

Newsletters

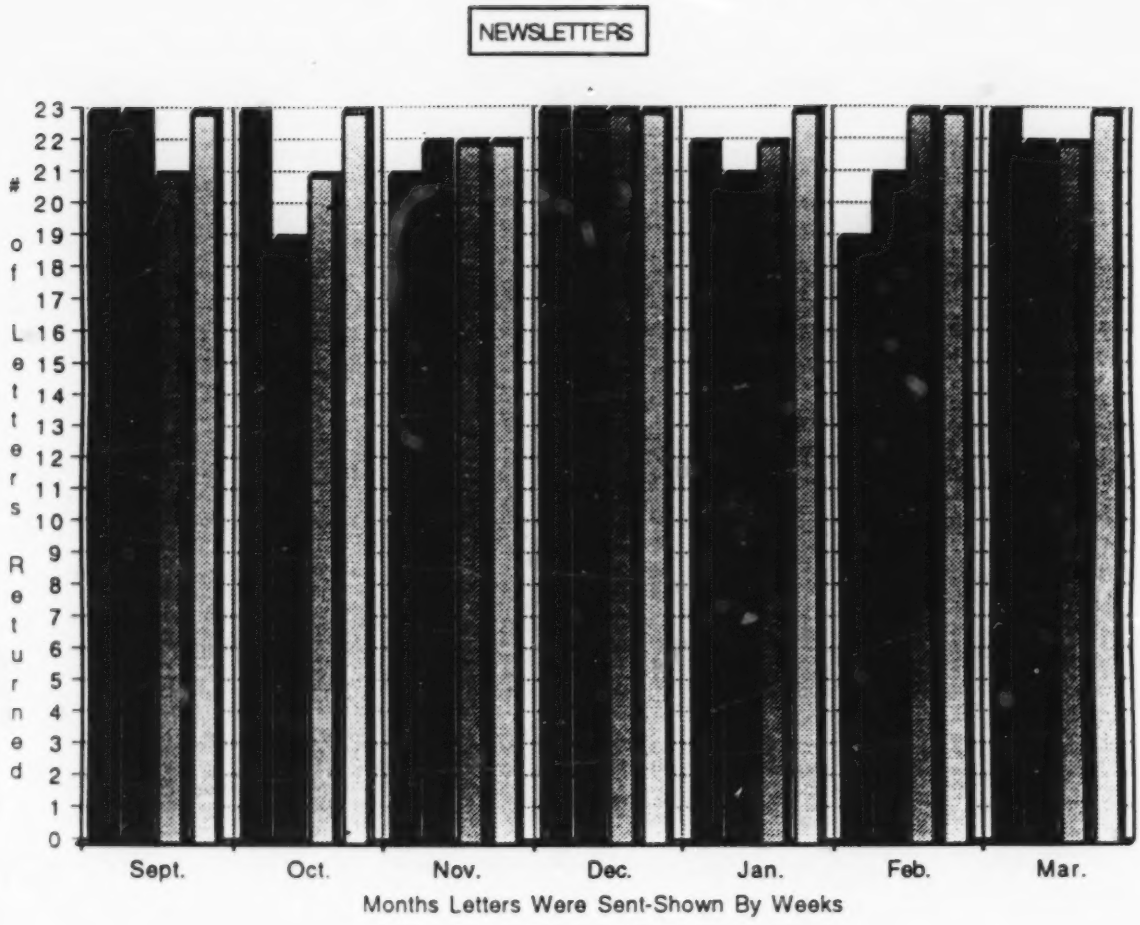
Early in the 1994-95 school year, Edgar Allan Poe Elementary School holds a Curriculum Night to inform parents of the policies they can expect for the new school year; as well as to meet their child's teacher. It was on this evening that the researcher informed the parents of the 23 targeted students that weekly newsletters would be sent home. Parents were also asked to sign and return these letters on the following school day.

The purpose of these newsletters were to inform parents about what was taking place within the classroom, in addition to what may be up and coming. Important dates and deadlines would be mentioned as well as the request for parent helpers. At times, suggestions may have been given to help with school related areas, such as, study skills, encouraging reading at home and responsibility.

The students were responsible for sharing the weekly newsletter with their parents and obtaining their signature, as well as returning the letter to the researcher. Upon receipt of the signed letter, the student's name would be placed in a bucket for an end of the month drawing. Three students a month were selected form the bucket and were rewarded with a surprise. All slips were then removed and the collection began for the new month. The students really enjoyed reading the weekly letters and especially looked forward to the surprise drawing at the end of each month.

Figure 1 represents the number of newsletters returned each month for a twenty week period from September, 1994, to March, 1995.

FIGURE 1



Surveys

The fifth grade students at Edgar Allan Poe School, as well as their parents were asked to complete an Information Exchange Survey. This survey was designed to help parents, students and teachers establish similar goals for the 1994-95 school year.

The Parents Information Exchange Survey was distributed in September, during the Curriculum Night evening, where a brief explanation about the survey and its designed purpose was also given. Parents were asked to return the form to the teacher by a given date. The students were asked to complete the Student Information Exchange Survey in class. The students were also given a brief explanation as to what they were going to be filling out and the reasons why.

The responses to these surveys were compiled and used to create goals for each student during the school year. Contact was made with parents of those students whose survey comments warranted such contact. During the November conferences, together, the parents and the teacher discussed the goals desired for the child and created strategies to reach the goals.

In March of 1995, a second conference was held. At this time the parents and teacher discussed the results of the goal setting process and the impact it had on their child. Most responses were very positive. A Parent Information Exchange Process Survey was distributed at that time requesting feedback about the entire process. The following chart reflects the responses of the survey (see Figure 2). Sixty five percent of the parents returned their Process Survey.

Parent Information Exchange Process Survey

Graphic

FIGURE 2

	A	B	C	D	E
1	7%	53%	33%	0%	7%
2	36%	50%	14%	0%	0%
3	36%	36%	28%	0%	0%
4	20%	40%	33%	7%	0%
5	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%

Questions one through five are representative of the following:

1. The Parent Information Exchange Process has had an impact on how well my child accomplished his/her goals for this school year.
2. Identifying my child's strengths, both in and outside of school, helped his/her classroom teacher get to know him/her better.
3. Identifying my child's interests and activities outside of school, helped his/her classroom teacher set to know him/her better.
4. Identifying how my child learns best was useful information for my child's teacher to know.
5. Involving my child in setting his/her goals, provided useful information for both my child's teacher and my child.

Letters **A-E** represent the following response categories on the survey:

A-Strongly Agree

B-Agree

C-Agree Somewhat

D-Disagree

E-Unsure

Parent Involvement

Parents of the fifth grade class were encouraged to be a part of their child's education. Various projects both in class and out of school often requested that the parents be actively involved. Class newsletters and verbal requests were means of obtaining the volunteers to help out. Occasionally, parents would offer their time to help within the classroom, even at times when it was not requested by the teacher. This was reflective of the open door policy of the researching teacher.

At times, homework assignments would be required to be completed with a parent. In addition, an at home reading club was also established from the beginning of the school year. This program would allow the students to earn points for the minutes they would read. Students were encouraged to read with a parent, which would allow the students to earn bonus points. This program proved to be fun and successful for both the students and the parents.

Positive Parent Contacts

The researching teacher frequently contacted the parents of the fifth grade students through phone calls, personal contacts as well as written letters to inform them of the positive growth and efforts made by their child.

Self-Esteem Lessons

The fifth grade classes at Edgar Allan Poe School participate in the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), program as part of the science / health curriculum. This program involves the education of drug and alcohol use and abuse. It also covers the ability to say "NO!" in uncomfortable situations, peer pressure and individuality which all directly affect self esteem. The program was taught by a trained police officer who

acted as a positive role model. In addition to D.A.R.E., the researcher completed mini lessons dealing with self-esteem and positive decision making. Daily classroom opportunities occurred for the students to demonstrate ways of encouraging positive self esteem.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

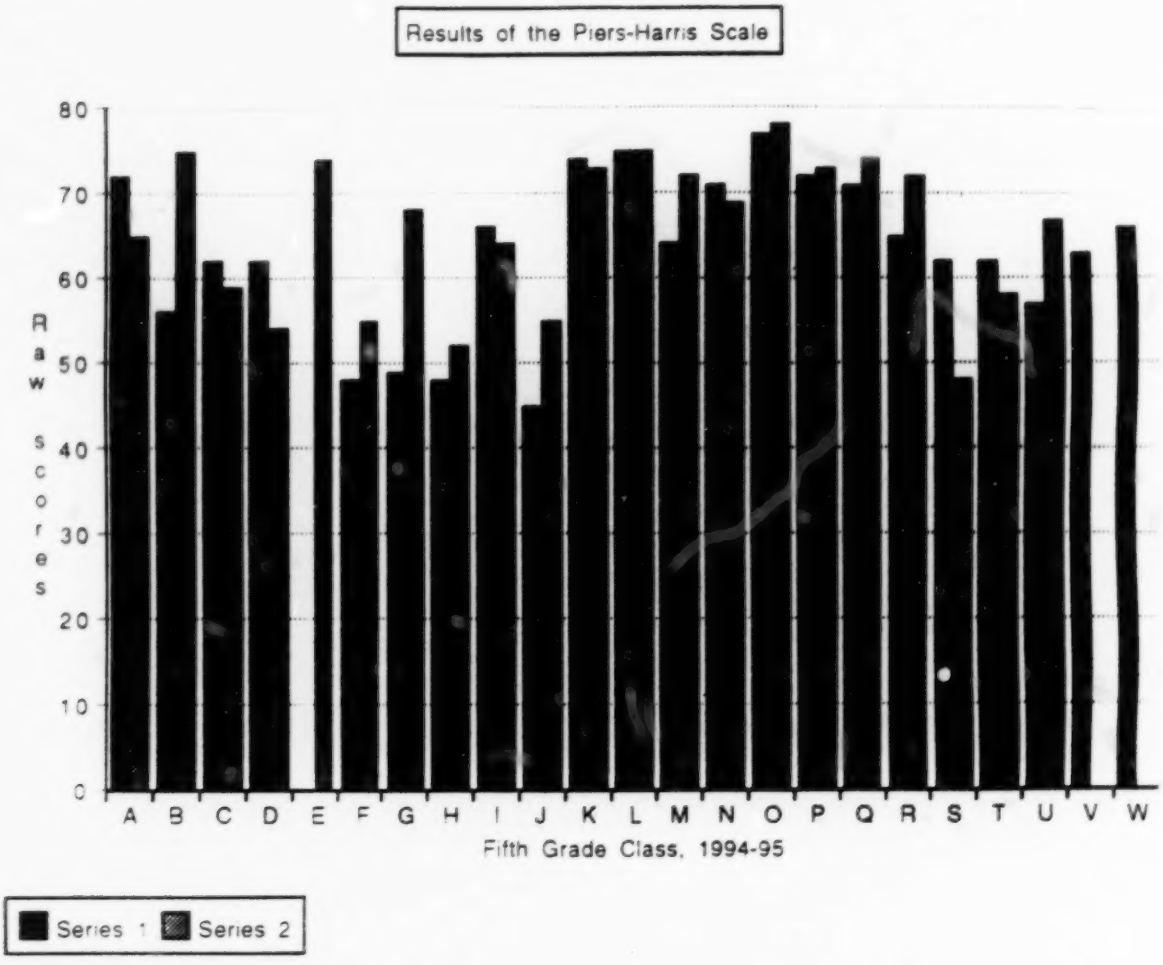
The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale was administered to the fifth grade students at Edgar Allan Poe School in the beginning of September, 1994, and again at the end of March, 1995. The purpose of administering the Piers-Harris was to measure how the child perceived himself /herself at the beginning of the school year and then at the end of March after the interventions discussed in chapter three had taken place.

The students were asked to read over the eighty questions answering them as honestly. The results of the September evaluation showed that sixty-one percent fell within the "above average" range, a raw score of 61-80, and thirty-nine percent fell within the "average" range, a raw score of 46-60. After viewing the scores from March, thirty-four percent improved their scores to the "above average" range, twenty-six percent maintained the "above average" range and twenty-six percent maintained "average" range scores. Four percent dropped from the "above average" range to the "average" range. The following graph illustrates these findings.

As the researcher administered and reviewed the results of the Piers-Harris (Figure 3), it was interesting to observe the students while completing the task at hand. Many did not value the questions and answered without reading the statements. Others read into the statement and thought about what the "correct" response would

be. It is because of these observations that the researcher questions the validity of this type of assessment and the degree which it is a reliable source. It was also interesting to calculate the scores of the tool to see if the score matched the attitude of the student.

FIGURE 3



Site B

Newsletter

The researcher at Prospect school began the year by writing and sending out a weekly newsletter called 4th GRADE NEWS. The newsletter contained important information concerning curricular activities, important dates, upcoming events, study tips, and also allowed parents the opportunity to respond with any questions or comments they might have. Furthermore, any other literature put out by the school or by the teacher could be attached to the newsletter. For example, spelling lists, study guides, and permission slips were automatically placed in the hands of parents because of the importance necessitated of receiving the newsletter. This helped parents keep better track of all written school communication.

Parent Information Exchange

Also at the beginning of the school year, researchers implemented an intervention Parent Information Exchange (PIE). This allowed parents to take a closer look at their child's strengths and weaknesses, and list the goals they had for their children for the upcoming school year. The survey also had parents share the activities and interests their children pursue outside the school day.

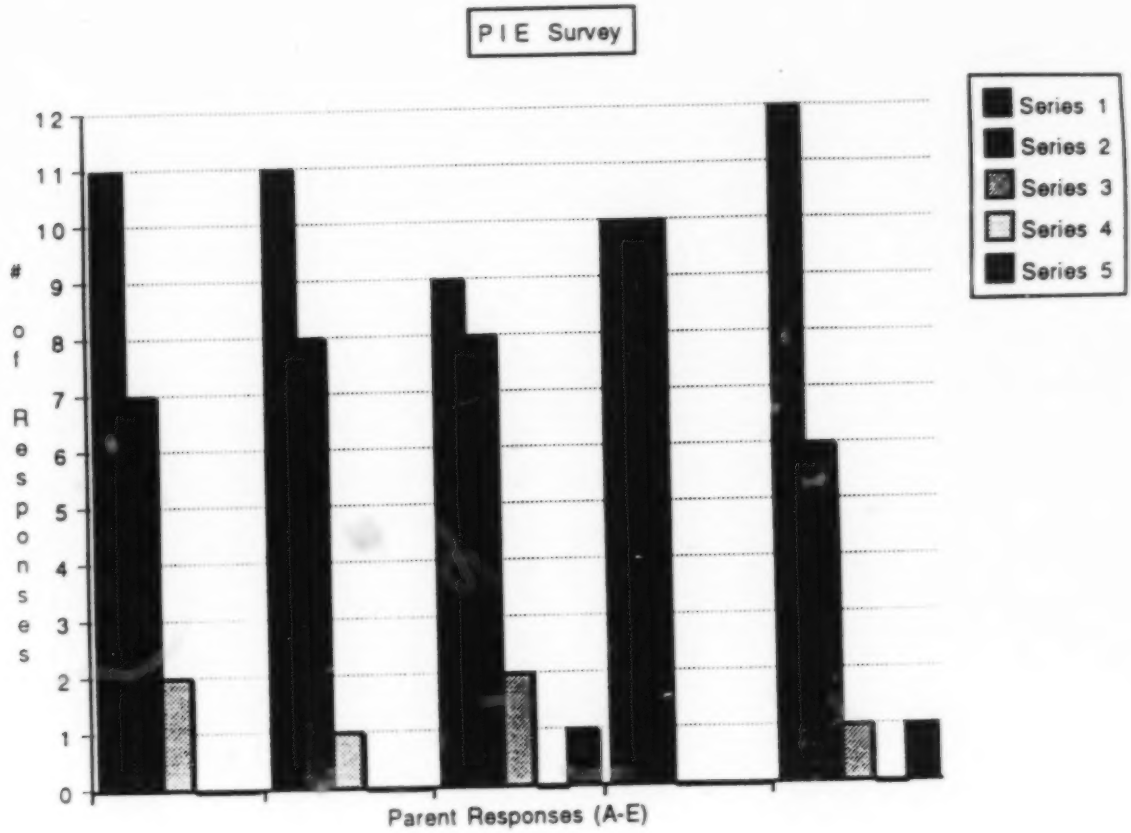
The students were also given the opportunity to set goals for themselves for the school year, list the things that they think make them special, and share the activities and interests they enjoy outside of school.

The aforementioned information was collected by the researcher and was then used to gain a better understanding on how to approach students in different situations, relate to their interests, and help them reach their, and their parent's goals.

At conference time in November both the researchers and the parents then discussed the progress of their children and any changes that may be necessary to further help their child.

February 1995, marked the end of the official intervention period, and at that time parents were surveyed as to their feelings on the effectiveness of the PIE. Figure 4 graphically illustrates the results of this survey.

FIGURE 4



Questions one through five are representative of the following statements:

1. the Parent Information Exchange Process has had an impact on how well my child accomplished his/her goals for this school year,
2. identifying my child's strengths, both in and outside of school, helped his/her classroom teacher to get to know him/her better,
3. identifying my child's interests and activities outside of school helped his/her teacher to get to know him/her better,
4. identifying how my child learns best was useful information for my child's teacher to know,
5. involving my child in setting his/her goals, provided useful information for both my child's teacher and my child.

Letters **A-E** represent the following response categories on the survey:

A- Strongly Agree

B- Agree

C- Agree Somewhat

D- Disagree

E- Unsure

Of the 25 families represented in the class, 20 responded to the survey. Responding to question one, fifty-five percent *strongly agreed* that the PIE had an impact on how well their child accomplished his/her goals for the year. Thirty-five

percent *agreed*, ten percent *agreed somewhat*, and zero percent *disagreed* or were *unsure*. In response to question two, fifty-five percent *strongly agreed* that identifying their child's strengths, both in and out of school helped his or her teacher to get to know him/her better. Forty percent *agreed*, five percent *somewhat agreed*, and zero percent *disagreed* or were *unsure*. Regarding question three, forty-five percent *strongly agreed* that identifying their child's interests and activities outside of school helped his or her teacher to get to know him/her better. Forty percent *agreed*, ten percent *agreed somewhat*, zero percent *disagreed*, and five percent were *unsure*. In response to question four, fifty percent *strongly agreed* and fifty percent *agreed* that identifying how their child learns best was useful information for their child's teacher to know. Zero percent merely agreed *somewhat*,*disagreed*, or were unsure. Lastly, in regards to question five, sixty percent strongly *agreed* that involving their child in setting his or her own goals provided useful information for both the child's teacher and their child. Thirty percent *agreed*, five percent *agreed somewhat*, zero percent *disagreed*, and five percent were unsure.

Not only was a Likert Scale used to illicit response from parents, but comments were also requested on the survey. Whereas there were no negative remarks, there were much positive feedback. Examples of parent comments are listed below.

> The Parent Information Exchange is wonderful!
> I truly feel that school, home, teachers and parents
> are all working as one. The zest for learning is evident!
> Jane has had a great year. I see a lot of independence
> emerging.

[Thc] newsletter was very helpful. It kept our family on track with where the class was going. Well done!

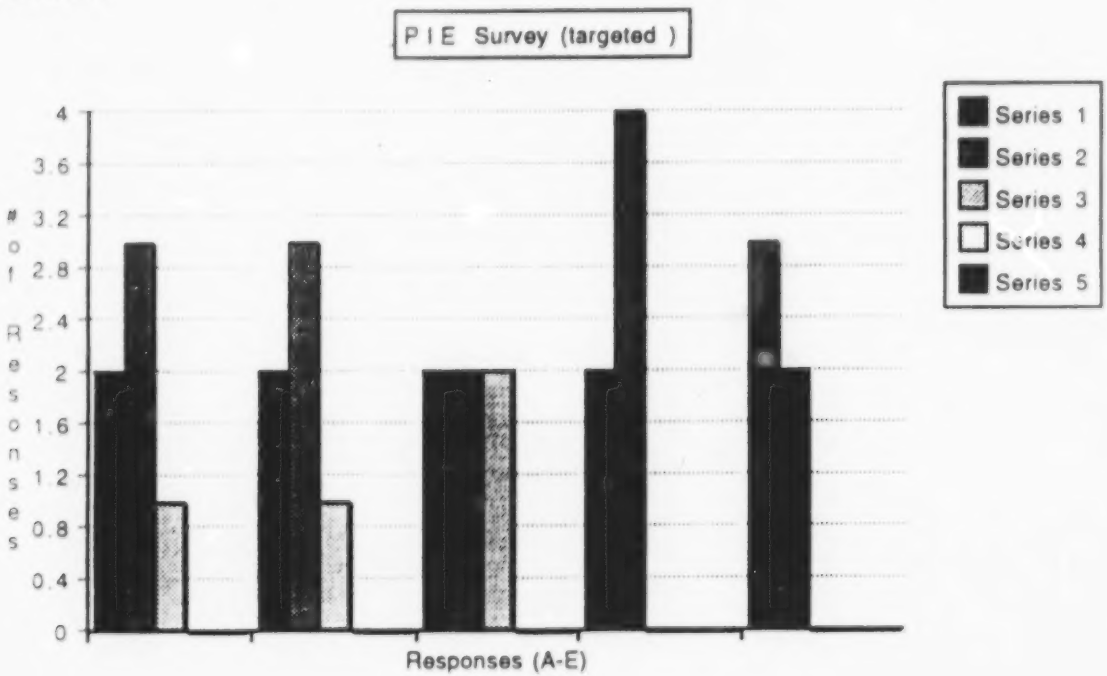
I think this was a great idea. It "individualized" each child which is very important. Thank You.

By identifying our child's strengths the teacher has been able to focus on the positive qualities of our child, thus building his self-esteem which is a critical factor in the learning process.

...by giving them the responsibility of setting their own goals and having a say in their learning makes them better learners and feel better about themselves as they are not always compared to others, only against themselves.

Of the seven targeted students, six completed the survey. Figure 5 illustrates how this group of parents responded to the five previously stated questions. Letters A-E represent the same responses as in Figure 4.

FIGURE 5



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Responding to question one, thirty-three percent of the targeted children's parents *strongly agreed* that the PIE had an impact on how well their child accomplished his or her goals for this school year. Fifty percent *agreed*, seventeen percent *somewhat agreed*, and zero percent *disagreed* or were unsure. The exact same results were reflected to question two, identifying their child's strengths, both in and out of school, helped his/her teacher to get to know him/her better. Question three, "Did identifying their child's interests and activities outside of school help his or her teacher to get to know him/her better?", was *strongly agreed* upon by thirty-three percent of the parents. Thirty-three percent *agreed*, and thirty-three percent *agreed somewhat*. Regarding question four, thirty-three percent *strongly agreed* that identifying how their child learns best was useful information for their child's teacher to know. Sixty-seven percent *agreed*, and zero percent *agreed somewhat*, *disagreed*, nor were *unsure*. Finally, in response to involving the children in setting their own goals to provide useful information for both the child's parents and the teacher, fifty percent *strongly agreed*, thirty-three percent *agreed*, zero percent *agreed somewhat* nor *disagreed*, and seventeen percent were *unsure*.

Parental Involvement in the Classroom

Both Prospect School and the participating researcher carry an open-door policy to the parents. In the whole school setting parents volunteer in the Learning Center, the office, the copy room, and in virtually every classroom.

In this researchers participating classroom, parent participation was evident in several different capacities. Parent volunteers for class parties and special events were already chosen before the school year began. This was due to a traditional function of the Prospect's Parent Teacher Association. These parents then met with

the researcher and teammate in September to plan their roles for the year. After discussion concerning the various holiday parties for the year, planning then turned to organizing parent teams to assist with preparations for the annual Native American Pow Wow. Groups of parents volunteered to come to the participating classrooms for a series of five Friday afternoons to work with the students on various projects to be displayed on the final presentation night. Furthermore, working parents and others who were unable to participate during the school day helped by making phone calls, designing and creating the program, cooking, making decorations, and helping set and clean up.

Parents also signed up to help out in the classroom and in the Learning Center to assist with editing student's writing. During the intervention period students both wrote research reports and stories that were "published." Parent volunteers came two times a week for approximately one and a half hours per day. Editing conferences were held individually with students to best facilitate the writing process.

Finally, parents also were involved in the classroom in a number of other ways: accompanying the class on field trips, teaching the Art Awareness program, giving special presentations (i.e. Chinese New Year), photocopying, supervising lunchtime, and signing numerous documents to signify that a parent contact had been established.

Positive Parent Contacts

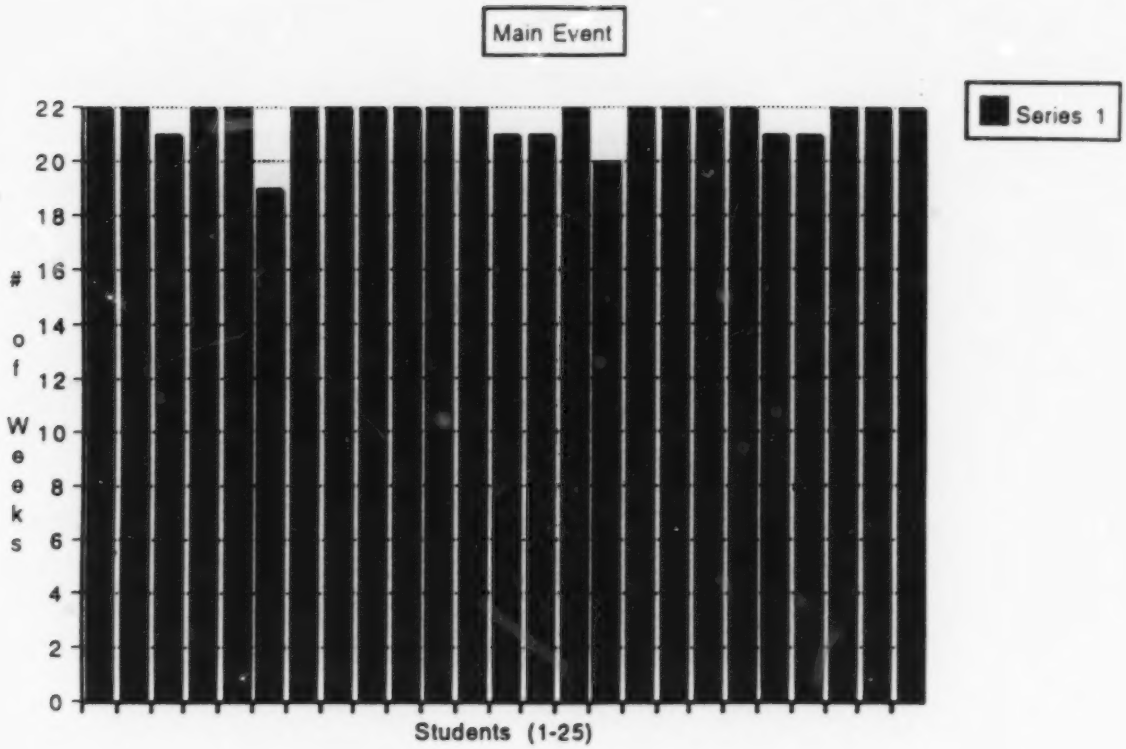
Beyond simply establishing parent contact, one of the interventions initiated by the researchers was to make positive parent contacts during the intervention period. Parents of Prospect's fourth graders were contacted in this capacity two to three times (three times if they were a targeted student). Both impromptu meetings occurring at

the school, and September, November, and January phone conversations were held solely to affirm something good the researcher had recently observed about a student.

Documentation of Positive Reinforcement

Developing a student's sense of self-esteem, consistently honoring such skills such as responsibility, social skills, and problem solving, as well as providing admirable role modeling, was inherent to the teaching style implemented by the researcher a Prospect School. Consequently, self-esteem programs such as Quest, which may provide worksheets to assess students development were not implemented. The self-esteem lessons were structured through cooperative groups and the social skills necessary to properly use this strategy. A behavior point system structured to reward positive behaviors and assess consequences to poor behavior was implemented to protect a child's sense of worth, and curtail the inappropriate behavior. At the end of each week, points were totaled and students who reached a preset goal were welcomed to a week's end session called Main Event. Over the course of the 22 week intervention period, students earned their way into Main /event ninety- eight percent of the time (see Figure 6). Also instrumental to this intervention were consistent, almost daily class discussions, centering on the topic of self-esteem and how to develop a sense of self worth. Many of these concepts were pulled from programs such as Project Charlie, Snowball, and D.A.R.E..

FIGURE 6



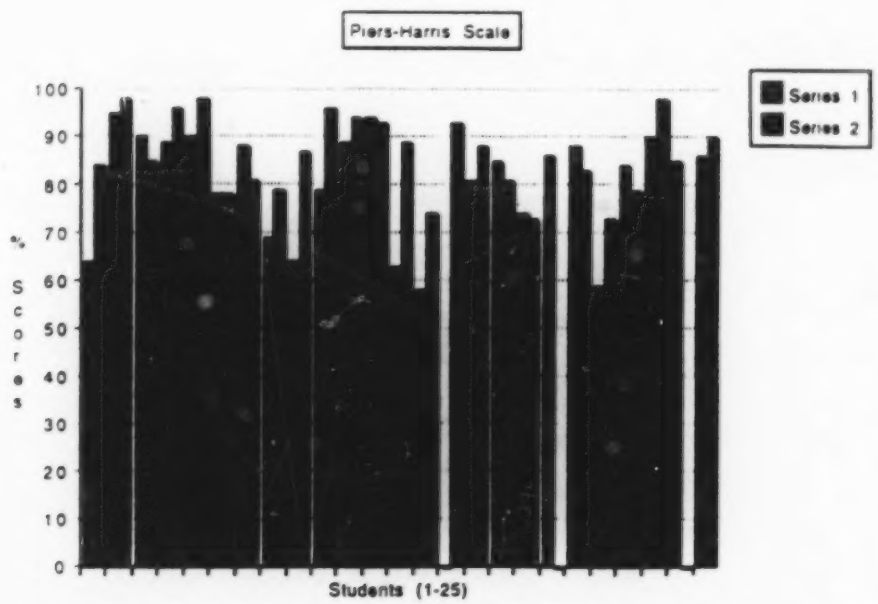
Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

In order to to more formally assess students' growth of self-esteem, researchers administered the *Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale*. This test was given at the beginning of the intervention period (August, 1994) and at the end (February, 1995). See Figure 7 for results.

Initially the Piers-Harris was administered to Prospect's 4th graders the first week of school in August of 1994. With 80 questions on the survey, a percentage was calculated to facilitate assessing the results. Scores ranged from a low of 58 percent to a high of 95 percent. The medium score was 77 percent, the mode was 90 percent, and the mean, 80 percent. The seven targeted students chosen by the researcher all scored 74 percent and lower.

When the Piers-Harris was administered a second time in February, 1995, and after six months for the interventions to be implemented, results of the test had changed. This time the low score was 73 percent with the high score reaching 98 percent. The medium score was 86 percent, the mode 90 percent, and the mean, 87 percent. These scores represent an average increase of 7 percent over September. Only five students scores decreased between test dates, and even then only by a total of 16 percentage points. Six of the seven targeted students' scores increased, and the one student whose decreased did so by only one percentage point.

FIGURE 7



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Students Speak Out....

One added assessment measure the researcher at Prospect School took was a written self-assessment completed by students. Students were asked to list positive qualities they possessed, and here are some of their remarks (100% of students participated)-

> ...(I'm) kind, giving, smart, helpful, a (better) writer, friendly, good, and generous.

> ...(I'm) nice, intelligent, friendly, responsible, helpful, caring, cooperative, encouraging, (I make) good eye contact, (I am a) good listener, (I am a) good team worker, humorous, behaved, and agreeable.

> ... (I am) kind, gentle, giving, (I give) good eye contact, caring, thoughtful, helpful, (I) like to give nice comments, and I include people.

100% of the targeted students responded positively to this self-assessment activity. Some of their comments were as follows-

> I am good at cursive, I'm helpful, I'm friendly, when I laugh other friends laugh (because) I'm funny.

> ...(I'm) responsible, (I have a) positive attitude, (I show) team effort, (I'm) helpful, participating, nice, (I) understand other people's abilities and disabilities, (I'm) persistent, (I have good) self-esteem, (I'm) friendly, patient, and caring.

Site C

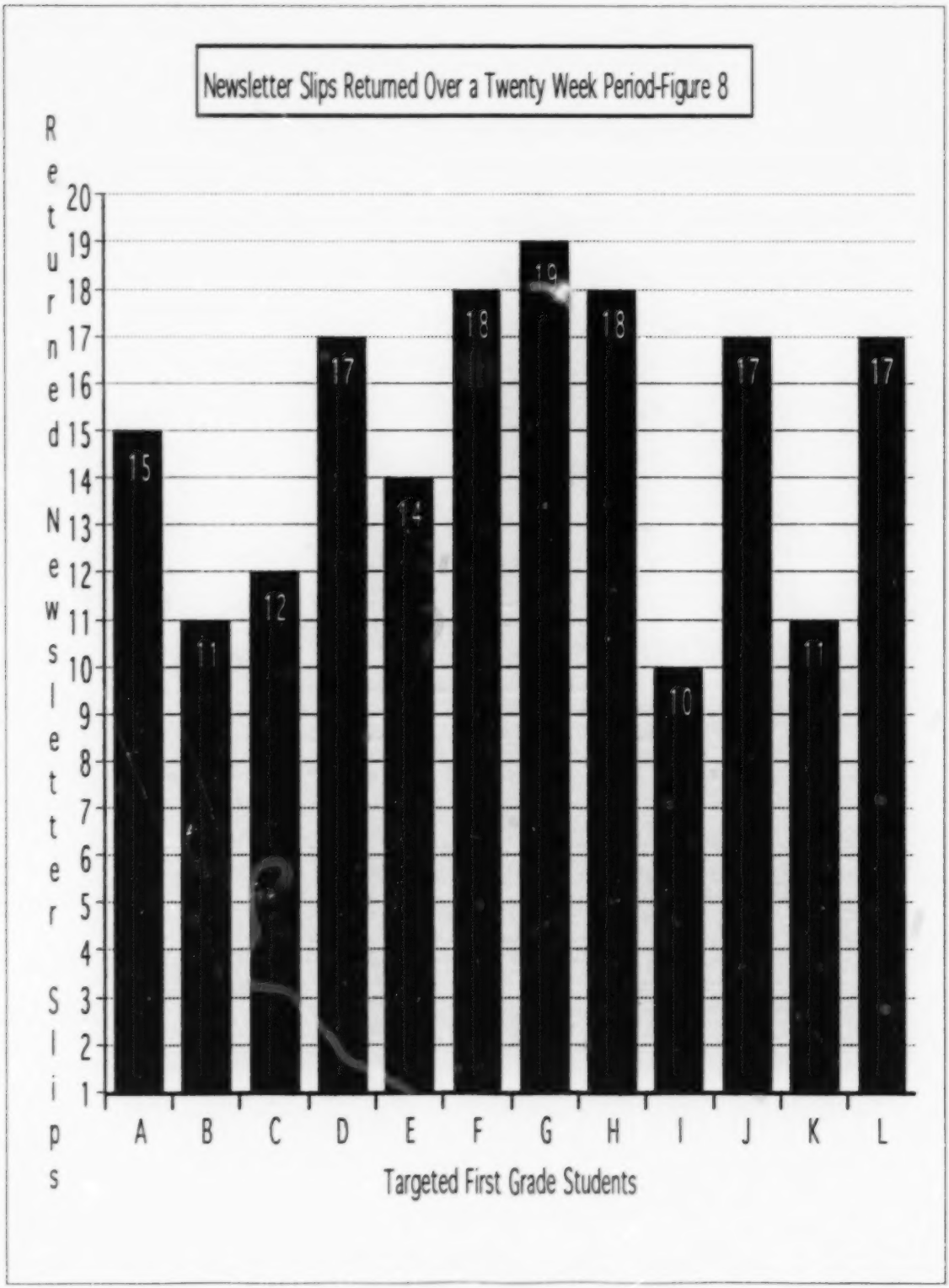
Newsletters

During the initial stages of the research conducted at Rondout School, parents were informed during an announcement at Curriculum Night, as well as through written communication, that newsletters would be distributed to all first grade students on a weekly basis. Parents were also made aware that each newsletter would have a space at the bottom for a parent signature, which upon signing, was to be returned to the first grade teacher the next school day.

The newsletters contained a variety of information regarding the first grade students' educational experiences, the special events and programs in which they were involved, important dates and information, as well as positive comments regarding the accomplishments of the first graders.

The first grade students were encouraged to show their parents the weekly newsletters, as well as to take responsibility for the return of the signature slips at the beginning of each week. These slips, acknowledging parental receipt of the newsletters, were placed in a container. At the end of each month a random drawing was held, and incentives were awarded to the three individuals whose name's were drawn. Then all slips were removed and collection of newsletter slips would again begin for the next month.

Figure 8 on the following page makes reference to the specific targeted students, and the frequency with which they returned signed newsletter slips over the twenty week period from September, 1994 to March, 1995.


Newsletter Slips Returned Over a Twenty Week Period-Figure 8
Returned Newsletter Slips
20
19
18
17
16
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
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Targeted First Grade Students

Surveys

The first grade students at Rondout School, as well as their parents, filled out information exchange surveys in August, 1994. These surveys were distributed as a means for aligning student, parent, and teacher goals for the school year.

Parent surveys were sent home with the students, along with a cover letter explaining the information exchange survey process. First grade students filled out a very simplified form of the survey in school.

Parent surveys were returned to school during the first week of September. Contacts with targeted parents were made when responses on the surveys warranted such contacts.

During parent- teacher conferences in November, 1994, the teacher, along with the parents of first grade students, discussed the information outlined in the surveys. Mutual goals for the school year were discussed for each child and reinforced.

In February, 1995, a second series of parent teacher conferences occurred. At this time the information exchange surveys were again viewed and discussed. Overall, parents felt very positive about the goal setting process as well as the progress their student had made towards accomplishing their goals. At the conclusion of each parent-teacher conference, a Parent Information Exchange Process Survey was distributed. Parents were asked to complete this form, in order to provide feedback concerning their feelings towards the information exchange process. A cover letter restating the objective of this process survey was also given to all parents at the conclusion of the parent teacher conference.

The following results illustrates how first grade parents at Rondout School responded to the Process Survey, which evaluated the Parent Information Exchange Process. Sixty four percent of the parents returned their Process Survey. The figures

indicate that the overwhelming majority of those responding either agreed or strongly agreed that the Parent Information Exchange process positively impacted on how well the first graders accomplished their goals for the 1994-1995 school year.

PARENT INFORMATION EXCHANGE PROCESS SURVEY RESULTS

A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. Agree Somewhat D. Disagree E. Unsure

1. The Parent Information Exchange Process has had an impact on how well my child accomplished his or her goals for this school year.

A	B	C	D	E
86%				14%

2. Identifying my child's strengths, both in and outside of school, helped his or her classroom teacher to get to know him/her better.

A	B	C	D	E
86%	14%			

3. Identifying my child's interests and activities outside of school helped his or her teacher to get to know him/her better.

A	B	C	D	E
71%	29%			

4. Identifying how my child learns best was useful information for my child's teacher to know.

A	B	C	D	E
57%	14%			29%

5. Involving my child in setting his or her own goals, provided useful information for my child's teacher and my child.

A	B	C	D	E
57%	29%			14%

Figure 9 on the following page graphically illustrates the aforementioned data.

PARENT INFORMATION EXCHANGE PROCESS SURVEY RESULTS-Figure 9

Question 1 Question 2 Question 3 Question 4 Question 5

Strongly Agree Agree Agree Somewhat Disagree Unsure

Parent Involvement

The parents of the first graders were encouraged to be a part of the educational experience at Rondout School. A parent reading club was established whereby parents had opportunities to sign-up in order to read to the first grade students. The parent reader and their first grade child made the book(s) selection together. On reading day the parent and child sat at the front of the story area and shared the books with the students. Photos were taken of the parent and child as they read. These photos were then displayed in the hallway under the banner, "Books Brighten Our Day".

Parents were frequently encouraged to participate in The Parent Reading Club through sign-up sheets provided at Curriculum Night, conference days, and as part of the weekly newsletter. Eighty three percent of first grade parents read to the class at least once during the targeted period, while 58% of the parents read twice or more.

In addition to the Parent Reading Club, parents were encouraged to become involved in classroom parties and celebrations. Parent volunteers were also enlisted to bind student manuscripts for publication from the Rondout Publishing Center. Parents were made aware of the open door policy of the first grade classroom through teacher contact and newsletters.

Positive Parent Contacts

The researcher contacted the parents of targeted students through phone calls, personal contacts, and written communications in order to provide positive reinforcement concerning student progress.

Self-Esteem Lessons

The first grade students at Rondout School were provided with weekly self-esteem building lessons utilizing the "Quest Skills For Growing" program. This program was developed as a joint effort by Lions Clubs International, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), The National PTA, and Quest International. The program is targeted for students in kindergarten through grade five. The goals of the program are to help children develop skills which lead to self-discipline, responsibility, good judgment, and getting along with others. In addition, the program is designed to help children develop positive relationships and commitments to their families, schools, peers, and communities. The Quest program is designed in a five unit format. The units are entitled, "Building a School Community," "Growing as a Group," "Making Positive Decisions," "Growing Up Drug-Free," and "Celebrating You and Me." During the course of each unit, the students work in booklets which are called "Together Times." These booklets reinforces the skills and concepts taught in each unit. At the conclusion of each unit, the booklets are taken home, and the students share the messages from each particular unit with their families. In addition to the "Quest" program, daily opportunities presented themselves with respect to dealing with the issue of positive self-esteem.

Documentation of Positive Reinforcement

Frequent efforts were made to provide positive reinforcement to all students with the intent of increasing student self-esteem. Due to the time constraints of the school day, it was difficult to accurately document the exact number of positive reinforcements which were made.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale

(The Way I Feel About Myself)

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale was administered to the first grade students at Rondout School at the beginning of September, 1994, and again at the end of February, 1995. The precise wording of some of the eighty question battery were altered to make them more understandable to a younger population. At no time was the meaning of any question changed, nor was any suggestion ever made on the part of the researcher which would have influence the responses of the students. The test was administered on an individual basis as the reading level was above that of the average first grader. The purpose of administering The Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale was primarily to measure the children's self attitudes at the beginning of the school year, and again in February after the interventions outlined in chapter three had taken place. The scores on the Piers-Harris scale which are usually considered to be within the "average" range fall between the 31st and 70th percentiles, equating to a raw score of 46 to 60. All of the targeted first graders at Rondout School scored in the average to above average range both times the scale was administered. In viewing February's scores, eighty three percent of the targeted students increased their raw scores on the Piers-Harris when compared with September, 1994's data. The scores of the remaining 17% of the students stayed the same for both testing sessions. Figure 10 illustrates these findings.

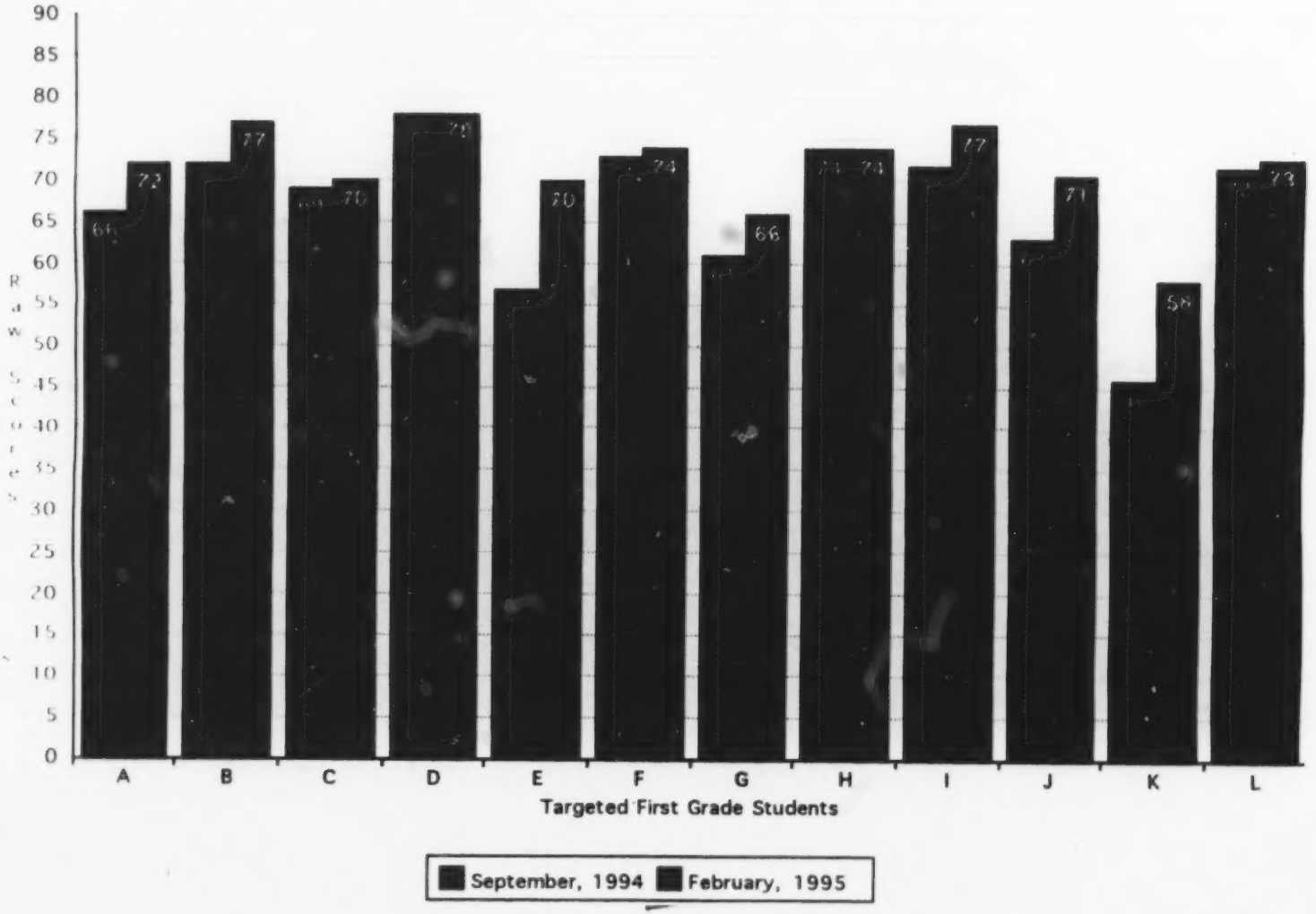
By administering the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale on an individual basis, the researcher became aware of the thought processes of some of the targeted students as they spoke out loud while deciding how to respond to a given question. It was interesting to note how some children interpreted a question in one way while other children viewed the same question in an entirely different manner. One

example is reflected in question number 26 which reads, "I am slow in finishing my work." Some students responded "no" to this question which according to the Piers-Harris Scale was the desired response. Yet, other students responded "yes" to this item because they felt it was important to take time to do a good job on school assignments.

Another question interpreted differently by individuals is illustrated in item number 77 which reads, "I am different from other people." Some of the students responded "no" to that item which according to the scale was the targeted response. Yet, other students responded "yes" to that test item because they felt that each of us is different from one another. Regarding question number 29 which reads, "I have pretty eyes," the targeted answer is yes. Yet, one male child responded "no", to this item because he felt his eyes were handsome, rather than pretty.

In viewing the data relating to the results of the first grade Piers-Harris Scale, and the graph charting return of the newsletter slips, the researcher attempted to see whether there was a correlation between scores on the Piers-Harris Scale and the frequency with which parents sent newsletter slips back to school. While the notion may exists that parent interest in school events, as reflected in the frequency with which newsletter slips were returned, would have a positive affect on student self-esteem, a direct cause/effect relationship could not be demonstrated solely with this data. It was apparent to this researcher that care needs to be taken when reviewing results from any testing instrument as many variables are reflected in the final score.

Results of the Piers-Harris Survey-Figure 10



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Newsletters

Prior to the start of the school year, parents were informed through a "Welcome Letter" that communication was an important part of the year. Therefore, they would receive a newsletter every week informing them about upcoming classroom events. Parents were made aware that the newsletter would arrive every Friday in their child's Take-Home Portfolio Folder. Along with the newsletter, there would be a comment sheet. The comment sheet needed to be filled out and returned on Monday. The function of the comment sheet was to allow both the parent and the child to take responsibility for home/ school communication as well as school work. Each Monday the child was responsible for returning the Take-Home Portfolio Folder with the comment sheet filled out. A completed comment sheet would consist of a parent's signature, a child's signature, a goal agreed upon by the parent and the child for the upcoming week and finally a comment or concern that either party may have had.

The percentage of parents who returned the necessary material on a weekly basis was 97 percent. Parents of the targeted group who returned the material on a weekly basis was 99 percent. This frequency applies to the weeks between September, 1994 to March, 1995.

Surveys

PARENT EXCHANGE

In September of 1994, the researcher mailed parents an informational exchange survey. The survey served as a tool for parents to assess goals or wishes they may have had for their child for the upcoming school year as well as a time to reflect upon their child's weaknesses or strengths. It also asked for parents to share activities their

child enjoys outside of school. The final component asked parents to state what type of learner their child was: visual, auditory, or "hands-on."

Many of the responses were similar. Most parents agreed that it was important for their child to enjoy school, work to their full potential, and feel good about his/her accomplishments.

Students were also asked to complete an exchange. This too was distributed in September, 1994. In a similar manner to the Parent Exchange, students were able to set goals for themselves. They were able to list any qualities which made them special and record any activities within school or outside of school which they enjoy.

A follow-up survey, the Process Survey, was given to parents in February, 1995. This gave parents the opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of the original Parent Exchange. The amount of surveys returned was twelve out of twenty, sixty percent of the parents. The following outline represents the options parents had to chose from for their answers:

Letter A...Strongly Agree

Letter B...Agree

Letter C...Agree Somewhat

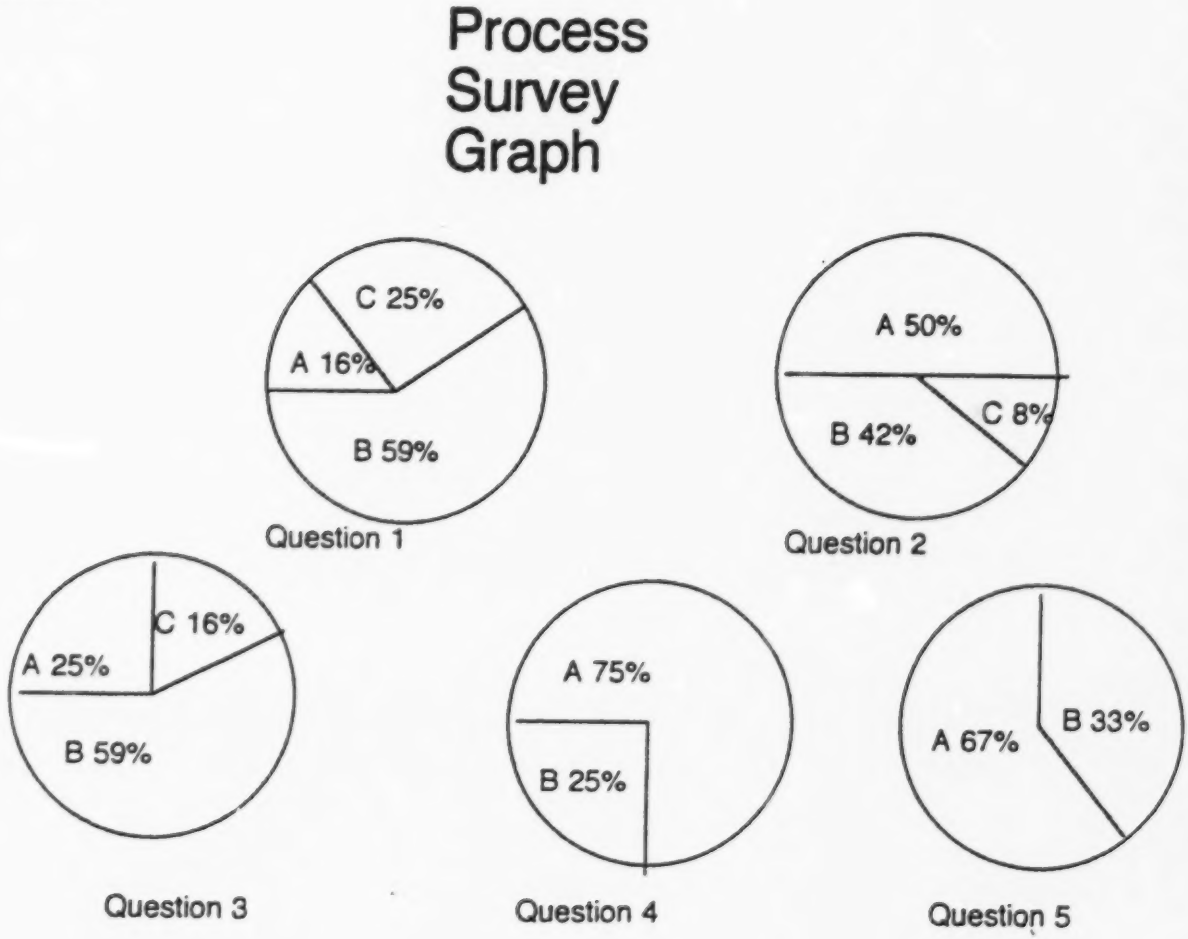
Letter D...Disagree

Letter E...Unsure

In question number one, 16 percent of the parents answered A. Fifty-nine percent answered B, and 25 percent answered C. In question number two, 50 percent of the parents answered A, 42 percent answered B, and eight percent answered C. Twenty-five percent of parents answered A for question number three, while 59 percent answered B, and 16 percent answered C. In question number four, 75 percent of the parents chose letter A as their answer, and 25 percent chose letter B. In the last

question, number five, 67 percent of the parents chose letter A, while 33 percent of the parents chose letter B. Figure 11 illustrates the results of the survey. When reviewing the graph, please note that letters D and E were never chosen by parents when taking the Process Survey.

FIGURE 11



Questions one through five were as follows

1. the Parent Information Process has had an impact on how well my child accomplished his or her goals for this school year,
2. identifying my child's strengths, both in and outside helped his or her classroom teacher get to know him/her better,
3. identifying my child's interests and activities outside of school helped his or her teacher to get to know him/her better,
4. identifying how my child learns best was useful information for my child's teacher to know,
5. involving my child in setting his or her own goals, provided useful information for both my child's teacher and my child.

The comments below were written by parents on the Process Survey-

> The Informational Exchange showed me that you were interested in my child as an individual; not just academically. This would certainly help you reach him.
> Every child learns in a different way and to know you are willing to adapt your teaching style to suit my child's needs was greatly appreciated."
> This showed me that the teacher cared about reaching every one of her students.

Parental Involvement

In August, parents were encouraged to sign-up as classroom volunteers. If they could not commit to a set schedule, they were further encouraged to take advantage of the researcher's open-door policy.

Six mothers out of twenty volunteered to help on alternating weeks for the entire year. As a result, the researcher had three mothers in the classroom every week. There were also five parents out of the remaining fourteen who requested to be called when a special time would arise in which extra help would be needed. In addition to the parents who came into the classroom weekly, many other parents became involved in classroom parties, as music "mom" or even as art parent.

Positive Parent Contacts

Positive parental contacts were made by the researcher to the parents who had a child in the targeted group each week. The researcher made these contacts by phoning parents, writing a personal notes to parents, sending home special awards the children received, or by stopping a parent in the hall to exchange any necessary information.

Along the same lines, the researcher gave put-ups to each of the children on a regular basis. Students who were in the targeted group received conscious positive acknowledgement from the researcher every day. However, the exact number of total times was not tallied by the researcher due to the rigorous demands which occur throughout a school day.

Self-Esteem Activities

Second graders at Edison school participated in the school district's self-esteem program, "Children Are People." The program was taught three times a week. The objectives of the program include developing the necessary skills within children which will lead to self-discipline for responsibility, doing the "right" thing in various situations, getting along with others and choosing a drug-free life-style.

Other specific activities presented to provide self-esteem opportunities included "Star of the Week," having a "guest" reader come in, creating a "me" poster and completing a research project on the child's family heritage (which included having a family member come in to talk about special events which took place in his/her family history). Along with the above stated examples of self-esteem activities, daily occurrences allowed each child an opportunity to feel positive about himself/herself.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

The Piers-Harris Concept Scale was distributed to the second graders in September, 1994 and then again in February, 1995. The original wording of the Piers-Harris was altered by the researcher due to the comprehension level of second grade readers. However, the intent of the questions was not changed, nor was the researcher attempting to influence the students' responses. The purpose of the concept scale was to measure each child's self perception at the beginning of the school year and then again in February. By doing this, the researcher was able to compare the two scores after the various interventions had taken place. A percentage was calculated by how many questions out of eighty the targeted child had correct. Figure 12 indicates the results of the six targeted children in the second grade class at Edison school.

FIGURE 12

Student	September '94	February '95
1	85%	92%
2	85%	96%
3	84%	95%
4	81%	95%
5	75%	88%
6	75%	91%

The first time the Piers-Harris was administered, the test results of the targeted

students ranged from 16 points lower than in February to seven points lower. Each of the targeted student's scores increased from September, 1994 to February, 1995. Nonetheless, it is uncertain which intervention impacted the targeted students the most.

After the Piers-Harris results were scored, the researcher met with the targeted group at individual times. The purpose of the meetings were to inquire about particular questions the student responded to "incorrectly." It was discovered by the researcher that the same question was interpreted differently by the students.

For example, question number 15 stated, "I am strong." A child who responded "no" commented the she did so because she could not lift heavy things. Another example is question number 69 which states," I am popular with girls." A child who answered "no" to this stated that he does not have many girls who like him as a boyfriend. A final example is question number 77 which states,"I am different from other people." A child who answered this "yes" justified her answer because she felt that everyone was different and that is what makes everybody special.

One last means of assessing each child's self-perception was for the students to write down a comment regarding himself/herself or how he or she felt about the school year. All students participated in this activity. Here are some of the comments.

> You (the researcher) have helped the whole class and we wish we could go through 2nd grade again.
>
> I enjoyed this year very much. Thanks Miss Rynes.
>
> I am very happy with myself this year.
>
> Now I have friends who think I'm nice.

Conclusions, Reflections, and Recommendations

According to the data analysis, it can be assume that researchers achieved their goal of helping students increase their levels of self-esteem through positive adult role model interventions. Researchers made every effort to increase parental involvement while implementing a risk-free classroom environment. Researchers at the four sites found an overall notable increase in student self-esteem scores based upon the results of the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale. In addition, the majority of parents indicated on the Parent Information Exchange Process Survey that including them in the goal setting process at the beginning of the school year was a valuable tool for helping their children achieve the specified goals, leading to an increase in student self-esteem.

The concept of improving self-esteem is broad in scope. The researchers found that at the core of their philosophical approach to teaching lies the notion that developing a sense of positive self-esteem in students is essential. Considering the multiple interventions which were implemented in the four sites, it was difficult to discern which specific intervention or combinations thereof, truly brought about increased self-esteem. Were the results merely a product of the researchers philosophical beliefs and approach to teaching? We must also accept the notion that children may intrinsically have the power to affect their own levels of self-esteem apart from any intervention. All of these variables play a factor in determining the actual reason(s) behind the increased levels of self-esteem displayed in the targeted students.

The researchers unanimously agreed that the newsletters served an invaluable source of information to communicate with parents. It was an important tool to keep parents informed about the day to day occurrences of school life, and acted as a line of

concept, it is then possible to help them to best attain their goals. Students need to feel good about themselves in order to feel able to take risks both with their learning, and their interpersonal relationships.

It is the recommendation of the researchers that

* parent/teacher lines of communication should be established early in the school year to establish mutual goals for the students,
* these goals should be reviewed and assessed throughout the year,
* self-esteem building concepts should be inherent throughout all educational programs, not simply taught out of context.

Although the data indicates that by implementing certain techniques and programs the self-esteem of students can be increased, there is no one "right" way or format by which this is to happen. A persons self-esteem is as unique to them as they are unto themselves. Therefore, the strategies adult role models implement to improve the self-concept of children must be equally as individualistic.

communication between parents and their children. As one parent stated, "I benefited from the weekly newsletters. They kept me informed of classroom activities, and promoted conversation with [my child]."

The Parent Information Exchange researchers learned, was also found to provide parents, teachers, and students with valuable insight toward specific goals that were established early in the school year. Reviewing these goals at Parent-Teacher conferences was a reinforcement that helped keep student goals in focus. It is the feeling of the researchers that the Parent Information Exchange yielded positive results in helping students achieve their goals.

Although there is little or no hard data to substantiate the notion that parental involvement in the classroom equates to increased student self-esteem, it is the feeling of the researchers that including the parents in classroom experiences can, in most cases, bring positive results. In many instances, parents made both written and verbal comments indicating the enjoyment and fulfillment they felt in being physically involved in their child's day at school.

As previously stated in the Deviation section of this document, the researchers felt that recording the amount and frequency of positive parent contacts was an unrealistic task. It is felt however, that positive comments to parents by teachers regarding their child's school experiences yielded positive parent-child contacts, and thus helped promote positive self-esteem in the children.

Although weekly self-esteem lessons, taught out of context, provided a framework for addressing the issue of building positive self-esteem in children, the researchers strongly felt that teaching self-esteem building skills should be at the core of any educational program. Self-esteem related issues need to be addressed as they occur, and not merely on a once-a-week basis. Once students achieve a positive self-